

Congressman Baird Leads Effort to Complete Lewis and Clark National Historic Park (October 19, 2005)

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird today led the effort to complete land acquisition for Lewis and Clark National Historic Park. Congressman Baird drafted and sent the following letter to Secretary of the Interior Department Gale Norton urging the Administration to allocate \$2.2 million in its FY 2007 budget request to acquire the rest of the Station Camp property.

"This final land acquisition will enhance the Park's allure and help educate visitors from around the world about Lewis and Clark's historic journey," said Congressman Baird. "The Lewis and Clark Park is an important part of our community; it brings jobs and tourism dollars to our region and protects Southwest Washington's natural resources for future generations to enjoy."

Congressman Baird, a co-chair of the congressional National Parks Caucus, introduced the legislation to authorize and create the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park. On July 19, 2004 the bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives with unanimous support. Senator Maria Cantwell's leadership helped guide similar legislation through the Senate and the bill was signed into law on October 30, 2004. In July 2005, Congressman Baird secured \$1.6 million for Park land acquisition in the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations Bill.

October 19, 2005

The Honorable Gale Norton

Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

We are writing to express our appreciation to you for the Bush Administration's leadership to commemorate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition by including land acquisition funding in the President's Fiscal Year 2006 budget request for the Lewis and Clark National and State Historical Park and to request your continued support for this initiative by including additional funding in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2007 budget request to Congress.

In the FY 2006 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, Congress fully funded the President's

\$1.6 million budget request for the newly-expanded Park in Washington and Oregon. These funds will allow the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire all the remaining lands owned by willing sellers in Oregon along with lands at Clark's Dismal Nitch in Washington state. The FY 2006 funds will also enable the NPS to begin the pre-acquisition work to acquire a conservation easement from interested private landowners at the recently authorized Station Camp unit in Washington state.

The owners of lands at Station Camp trace their lineage directly back to the McGowan family, the original homesteaders and owners of the site. The current owners are interested in selling a conservation easement to the NPS to ensure that lands around Station Camp are permanently protected. Under this proposal, the lands would remain in private ownership.

In order to acquire the conservation easement at Station Camp, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of \$2.2 million in funding in the President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget request to Congress. If approved, these funds would allow the NPS to protect the last remaining large tract of private land within the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. These funds are especially needed to replenish the Park's land acquisition account in light of the recently completed sale of the Weyerhaeuser property to the NPS and the agency's pending commitment to obligate the FY 2006 funds.

In addition, these funds would complement the significant state funding commitments from the Washington State Historical Society to donate lands at Station Camp to the NPS and from the Washington State Department of Transportation to relocate a short section of Highway 101 to support this important project. In addition, these lands are immediately adjacent to Fort Columbia State Park under the management of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Local communities are especially excited about completing the Park's land acquisition program in light of the upcoming bicentennial commemoration later this fall. Accordingly, we wish to extend an invitation to you to participate in the Destination the Pacific celebration scheduled for November 11-15, 2005 along the lower Columbia River in Oregon and Washington. In the event that you are able to attend, we encourage you to visit Station Camp the site of the Corps of Discovery's first sighting of the Pacific Ocean and its famous vote.

Your support for funding in the FY 2007 budget request will help complete this historic initiative and leave a lasting legacy to the American people and commemorate this vital chapter in our nation's history.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Congressman Brian Baird

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Congressman David Wu

Congressman Rick Larsen

Congressman Earl Blumenauer

Congressman Adam Smith

Congressman Peter DeFazio

Congressman Jim McDermott

cc: The Honorable Josh Bolten, Director, Office of Management and Budget